
News Release

U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Geological Survey

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Water, Water Everywhere

The saying, "keep your nose to the grindstone," came to life as campers from Science Camp 1999, at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), sniffed the putrid smell of grinding stones scraping, a warning sign to millers that an impending spark could ignite the highly explosive flour dust. Ann Korzeniewski, Fairfax County Park Authority historian and assistant director at Colvin Run Mill Historic Site, explained how water powered the waterwheel at the c.1811 gristmill, putting a series of wooden gears into motion to turn the burr stones to slice, not grind, through wheat and corn to create flour and livestock feed. A tour of Colvin Run Mill was just one of the many activities planned for Hydrofantastic, the third 2-week session of the highly successful science camp developed by the USGS in partnership with the Reston Association. Four 2-week sessions are offered for children ages 8-12.

During the 2-week Hydrofantastic water theme session, Bill Wilber, USGS hydrologist, discussed "Water Quality in Your Backyard." He showed campers how organisms such as crayfish, hellgrammites, and crane fly larvae survived in Difficult Run, a local stream. He explained the importance of keeping area streams free of contaminants because they are tributaries to the Potomac River and, ultimately, the Chesapeake Bay.

Onboard a Potomac river boat near Old Town Alexandria, Herman Feltz, retired USGS hydrologist, demonstrated how the area drought has affected the Potomac River. It has caused oxygen deficiencies and the resulting fish kills, a lack of fresh water to flush out contaminants, and the death of submerged aquatic vegetation in the murky, overheated waters.

Other educational activities during the Hydrofantastic session included making an example of a Newtonian fluid (a thready concoction of borax soap flakes, water, glue, and food coloring) in the science lab and looking at Internet Web sites that focus on hydrology. The children also developed their own movie through a partnership effort with Reston-based Jones Communication, swam at area pools, made tie-dyed t-shirts, and boated on Lake Anne.

The last Science Camp 1999 session scheduled is Diagnosis Fun. For more information on the Reston Association Science Camps, please contact the Reston Association Registrar's office at 435-6551.

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As the nation's largest water, earth and biological science and civilian mapping agency, the USGS works in cooperation with more than 2,000 organizations across the country to provide reliable, impartial scientific information to resource managers, planners, and other customers. This information is gathered in every state by USGS scientists to minimize the loss of life and property from natural disasters, contribute to sound economic and physical development of the nation's natural resources, and enhance the quality of life by monitoring water, biological, energy, and mineral resources.

USGS

(Note to Reporters/Editors: If you are interested in obtaining digital photographs of the activities mentioned in this news release, please contact Cheryl O'Brien at 703-648-5929 with your e-mail address.)